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The role of personality traits and religious beliefs in tendency to addiction

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Abstract

The study investigated differences of personality traits and religious orientation in addicted and normal people. 109 addicted people and 109 normal people were randomly selected and fill out NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Alport's E/I religious orientation. Mean scores were compared with T independent tests. Analysis of means indicated addicted people scored higher on Neuroticism, Openness to experience and External religious orientation, and lower on Extroversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness than normal people. Attentions to internal religious orientation and personality traits can help the psychologists to diagnose and reduce the psychological problems during drug treatment and increase efficacy of treatment methods.

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Keywords: Personality traits, Religious Beliefs, External religious orientation, Internal religious orientation, Addiction

1. Introduction

Addiction is a psychological problem that interrupts the normal life of a person and covers many aspects of sciences such as medicine, sociology and psychology. Addiction is difficult to treat and can be regarded as an essential factor of abnormal behaviour such as crimes, murders, mental and physical illnesses. Various situations and conditions may cause to addiction. Addictive behaviour often involves long-term psychological problems or ongoing stressors in a person's life. Although addiction may have several forms, but this creates the question that why a same position for one person will lead to addiction, but the other person in the same condition remains healthy, and how people treat addiction. A number of studies have documented the high comorbidity of drug use with other mental disorders (Nutt, King, Saulsbury & Blakemore, 2007; Reuter, 2006, Grant and et al, 2004,) which indicate that mood, anxiety, and personality disorders need to be considered by drug treatment specialists to achieve successful intervention. In this way the important matter for evaluating of aetiology of addiction is consideration of personality problems and religion or religious beliefs in substance abusers. Studying personality differences and religious beliefs between drug users and non-users can have important clinical implications due to the large number of people involved. In this field the five-factor model (FFM) of personality is a conceptualization of personality comprising behavioural, emotional and cognitive patterns which comprehensively covers the five major traits that define human personality across cultures: Neuroticism (N), the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression; Extraversion (E), the tendency to be sociable, warm, active, assertive, cheerful, and in search of stimulation;

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Openness to Experience (O), the tendency to be imaginative, creative, unconventional, emotionally and artistically sensitive; Agreeableness (A), the dimension of interpersonal relations, characterized by altruism, trust, modesty, and cooperativeness; and Conscientiousness (C), a tendency to be organized, strong-willed, persistent, reliable, and a follower of rules and ethical principles. Each of these factors is hierarchically defined by specific facets, which can provide a more in-depth description of drug users' personalities (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005, & Terracciano & McCrae, 2006). Studies of relationships between FFM dimensions and mental health indicate that people with psychiatric disorders have distinct personality patterns (Widiger & Costa, 1994). In an extended research Terracciano, Corinna, Rosa, Löckenhoff, Crum, Bienvenu, Paul & Costa (2008) studied personality traits in cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine and heroin users. Cigarette smokers scored lower on Conscientiousness and higher on Neuroticism than non smokers. In more extreme, it is similar the profile of cocaine / heroin users, which scored very high on Neuroticism, especially, and very low on Conscientiousness. By contrast, marijuana users scored high on Openness to Experience, average on Neuroticism, but low on Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Also research on the opioid-dependent sample showed they scored higher on Neuroticism, lower on Extraversion and lower on Conscientiousness than the controls. Effects sizes were small for the difference between the groups in Openness to experience scores and Agreeableness scores (Korner & Nordvik, 2007). People with substance use / drug abusers seem to have a similar personality profile: low score in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and high score in Neuroticism. Moreover personality, one of important factors in religious societies is religious beliefs. Religion and to be religious can play an important role in human's individual and social life. The religion can be entered in many aspects of human's behaviour and can affect on their behaviour and reduce probably of abnormal functions. Religious beliefs can have positive effects on mental health, and also religious viewpoints can be perceived completely different in the same persons. Upon Alport and Ross (1967) religious can be divided in two forms: internal and external religious orientation. Internal religious orientated people live with their religion but who is external religious orientated abuse the religion in order to external uses. Brgin (1983) showed internal religious orientation have positive effect on mental health, decreasing of anxiety and depression, increasing of self-esteem and responsibility towards their community and self. Also, Genia & Shaw (1991), Hae Seong, Wanpen, Doglas & Raynock (1998), Homayouni (2009), Homayouni (2010), Macintosh, Sillver and Wortman (1993) showed that internal religious orientation is related to decreased depression, stress and anxiety, increasing of accountability and happiness, low tendency to abnormal behaviour and addiction, good assessing and dealing with stressful events well. So considering the fact that addiction is multifaceted concept that several factors including cultural diversity, sociological background, anxiety, depression, inability to control impulses, low responsibility towards their community, and low ability for control of stressors can play important role, this study investigated the role of personality traits and religious orientation in tendency to addiction.

2. Methodology

The samples consisted of 109 addicted people and comparison samples, 109 normal people with no addiction history that were randomly selected and completed the self-report questionnaire Iranian Revised NEO Personality Inventory NEO - FFI and self-report questionnaire of Alport's E/I religious orientation. NEO - FFI consists of 60 items on a five-point Likert format. It assesses five basic personality traits: Neuroticism (N), Extroversion (E), Openness to new experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). It has been translated into several languages and used in many countries and cultures and a large literature demonstrates cross-observer agreement and prediction of external criteria such as psychological well-being, health risk behaviours, educational and occupational achievements, coping mechanisms, and longevity (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Terracciano and et al, 2008). The NEO - FFI has been used and validated in numerous studies and has been agreed upon by numerous personality researchers to be an accurate measure of the 5-factor model. Internal consistency for the five domains of the NEO-FFI was calculated using coefficient Alpha, which ranged from .68 to .86. The NEO-FFI scales correlate well with the full scales of the NEO-PI-R ranging from .88 to .94. Also Alport's E/I religious orientation questionnaire consists of 21 items was answered on a four-point Likert format. Alport's E/I religious orientation assesses two dimensions of religious orientation: Internal / External religious orientation. Alport's E/I religious orientation has been translated into several languages and used in many countries and cultures and showed good validity and reliability. Reliability of Iranian version of scale was above 0/70 based on the coefficient Alpha (Janbozorgy, 1999; Homayouni, 2010).

3-Results

Analysis was conducted using the statistical package SPSS, version 16.0 in independent T to find differences between addicted and normal people. Analysis of means indicated significant differences among tow groups (see Table 1, 2). Compared to normal people, addicted scored higher on Neuroticism and Openness to experience, and lower on Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and External religious orientation.

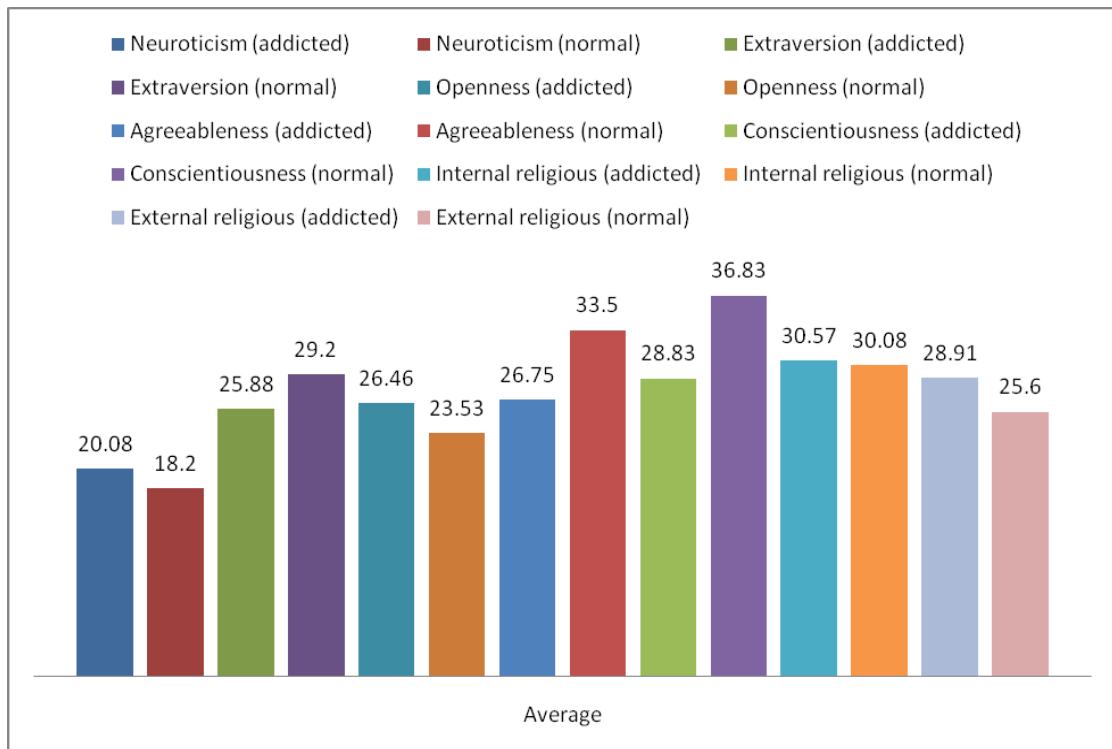


Figure 1. Histogram of personality traits and external / internal religious orientation in tow groups

Table 1. Mean and variance of addicted people in personality traits and religious orientation

	Mean	Variance
Neuroticism	20.80	43.72
Extraversion	25.88	24.94
Openness to experience	26.46	27.16
Agreeableness	26.75	38.04
Conscientiousness	28.83	42.81
Internal religious	30.57	20.52
External religious	28.91	35.16

Table 2. Mean and variance of normal people in personality traits and religious orientation

	Mean	Variance
Neuroticism	18.20	35.68
Extraversion	29.20	34.86
Openness to experience	23.53	13.42
Agreeableness	33.50	23.98
Conscientiousness	36.83	37.31
Internal religious	30.08	19.62
External religious	25.60	30.58

Table 3. Analysis of means of personality traits and religious orientation in addicted and normal people

	T	d.f	Level of significant
Neuroticism	6.93	216	.000
Extraversion	4.48	216	.000
Openness to experience	4.84	216	.000
Agreeableness	8.95	216	.000
Conscientiousness	9.33	216	.000
Internal religious	0.72	216	.468
External religious	3.88	216	.000

4. Discussion

Accordance to previous research, Korner & Nordvik (2007), Saulsman & Page (2004), Malouff, Thorsteinsson & Schutte (2005), Terracciano and et al (2008), Homayouni (2010), our findings showed addicted people are more neuroticism and Open to experience than normal people. Also it showed normal people are more extroverted, agreeable and conscientious than addicted people. Recent research indicates the important of personality components in both diagnosis and treatment of addiction. Personality traits are associated with the outcome of therapeutic interventions. For example, several studies found Neuroticism, anxiety, and depression disorders related to poor treatment outcome for nicotine dependence. Individual differences among substance abusers can play an important role in the choice of treatment options. Recently, more attention has been focused on personality effects on the efficacy of different treatment plans to tailor therapeutic interventions to individual needs. More research is needed to fully evaluate how personality assessment can be useful in the choice of treatment plans. Because of the low conscientiousness, high impulsivity, and high emotional vulnerability of most drug abusers, relying on an individual's resources, without therapeutic intervention, may produce limited results (Terracciano and et al, 2008). With identifying personality factors that influence on tendency to addiction, we can help the people plan better treatment and use more useful and newer strategies to cease addiction. Evaluating with reliable measures and with more attentions to personality components can reduce the psychological problems that are related with addiction before and during treatment. Also results of the study indicated that addicted people had more scores in external religious orientation. They use religion for acquiring social prestige confirmation, and apply the religious to access their individual goals (Cohen 1990, Larsen and colleagues, 1992). When they do not access their goals, they disappointed, get anxiety and depression, and try to make a defence about the event. The internal religious oriented people tend to religious for developing in personality, life, attitude and cognition and like to reach the optimal goal that is cognition of God, and this is a factor that makes them hopeful and not disappointing from bad event and not reaching to goals. But in external religious oriented people, when they do not reach to goals, disappoint soon and want to make defence that one of the defences is addiction.

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